



Testimony of the Connecticut AFL-CIO before Program Review and Investigations Committee

February 27, 2015

Good afternoon. Representative Carpino, Senator Fonfara and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee. In support of:

SB 972 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE CONCERNING SCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONALS STAFFING

While the AFL-CIO has supported maintaining teacher levels and funding efforts, tight budget constraints in most municipalities have drastically reduced the staffing levels of paraprofessionals. These reduced levels have also lead to the disruption of a paraprofessional's primary role in the education process as they are often rotated into other roles outside of classrooms as well as adding burdens to families of the children that need additional attention of paraprofessionals. This is not fair to the student, the teacher or the class they are normally assigned to. We are hopeful that this bill will go forward to address the full impact of reductions and the necessary value of paraprofessionals within all schools.

The Connecticut AFL-CIO supports the recommendations of our testimony of our AFT affiliate and believe the bill would be strengthened by including additional recommendations of the committee's report on Paraprofessional Staffing as follows:

•**Recommendation #3:** Require the State Department of Education to inspect of a random sample of Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) to ensure that the language outlining paraprofessional services is written with sufficient degree of specificity. This would prevent districts from drafting overly vague language that would provide too much flexibility in human resource matters rather than putting the emphasis on student needs.

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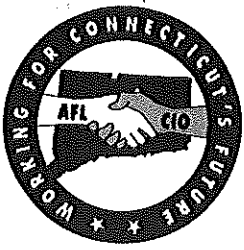
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•**Recommendation #6:** Require the State Department of Education to provide guidance to districts about how IEPs should be drafted to specify the frequency and duration of services and supports and provide examples of both appropriate and inappropriate language. This will ensure that districts write IEPs clearly enough to avoid confusion and misunderstanding and improve compliance on a number of issues, including non-certified staff needs.

•**Recommendation #7:** Require the State Department of Education to conduct a random audit of a sample of districts' substitute teacher rosters and verify that each individual listed has a bachelor's degree, as required by statute. Currently there is not enforcement of this statute. Recommendation #7 would mark an important beginning and it would simultaneously verify that paraprofessionals are not being pulled from their duties to serve as a substitute teacher.

SB 972 in its current form, together with recommendations 3., 6 and 7 would provide the mechanisms to address the problems we paraprofessionals brought to the committee last session. We urge you to JFS this bill with those improvements.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lori Pelletier

Executive Secretary Treasurer, Connecticut AFL-CIO

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